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UNCLAS HANOI 000619

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SUBJECT: GVN CONCERNED OVER VIETNAM HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

1. (U) In a meeting with Charge on March 13, Assistant Foreign Minister Nguyen Duc Hung, concurrently Director of the MFA's America's Department, expressed concern that the Vietnam Human Rights Act (VHRA) will be reintroduced in the U.S. House of Representatives. Such legislation is "not in the interests of either the U.S. or Vietnam and will harm the bilateral relationship," Hung stated. "No one wants a repeat of what happened in 2001," he claimed. Hung also predicted that the legislation would lead to "strong reactions from the media and the Vietnamese people."

2. (U) Hung told the Charge that, while the GVN understands that this bill represents only a "small minority view," it is "counterproductive." He asked that the Charge inform Washington how seriously this bill, if introduced, will be viewed in Vietnam. He urged that the Department work against the VHRA reintroduction to avoid a "strong reaction" in Vietnam. In contrast, Hung pointed to the success of last week's Asia Society conference and how it had "done much" to advance "mutual understanding," especially with the US business community.

3. (U) Charge told Hung that he would pass the GVN's concern to Washington. He urged Hung to encourage the GVN embassy in Washington to increase its outreach efforts to the Vietnamese community and others in the U.S. PORTER